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ABSTRACT

Many rural schools today are faced with problems of inadequate facilities and instructional materials, limited course offerings, inadequate funding, poor teaching, and limited job opportunities for students. Rural young people, particularly women, have bleak prospects for post-secondary education or non-traditional employment. Because rural youth perceive few or limited educational and occupational options, many have low aspirations, expectations, and self-esteem. Rural girls expect marriage and aspire to lower professions because they lack adequate career counseling and positive role models. Few teachers have specific preparation for rural teaching. Preservice/inservice education for rural teachers should include teaching in multi-grade classrooms; integrating disciplines/subject areas; planning/implementing instruction in multiple subjects in numerous preparations per day; supervising extracurricular activities; planning the curriculum; utilizing community resources; enhancing learning with limited instructional resources; and working with parents to promote pupil growth. Career counselors should be sensitive to problems of rural women. Microcomputers and other technological advances may expand possibilities for entrepreneurial businesses in rural areas, and so increase job opportunities. Rural teachers and business people should serve as role models for rural youth. School-Based Community Development Corporations could link schools, communities, and businesses to improve rural education and quality of life. (MH)

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FUTURE ISSUES IN RURAL EDUCATION

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Introduction

About one-fourth of the U.S. population live in rural areas. According to the definition used by the U.S. Bureau of Census this means that they do not live in places of 2000 or more residents. Of those classified as rural, about one-fifth live in towns and villages of less than 2000 while the others live outside those towns and villages in open country, usually farms or ranches.

Today many changes are occurring in rural America: the population is growing; service and job opportunities are increasing; and the widespread poverty which characterized rural life in the past is being reduced. The image of the rural community as a small, isolated settlement with people of similar backgrounds and values is giving way to a modern image that includes diverse socio-economic status, professions and ethnic/social groups. Rural communities will continue to grow and change increasingly as a result of the impact of the electronic cottage industries as well as delivery of services through electronic mail, electronic shopping and telecommunications.

Despite these changes, rural communities will continue to be distinctive in several ways; they will continue to have fewer residents and will generally be located further away from many services. Economic resources will still be at a lower level despite improvements and the persistence of traditional values, institutions and social stratifications will continue to characterize rural communities.

Predictions of future trends in rural education need to consider rural attitudes and values as well as changes in socioeconomic status and community economic structure. These factors must be considered in the discussion of future job and professional opportunities of rural youth. More than any

other variable, the rapidly expanding technological advance in the U.S. will probably exert the greatest influence on the future job markets for rural youth. Currently educational applications of microcomputers in classrooms present promising public and private school approaches that will provide services not presently available to rural schools. One of the benefits which will ensue is the opportunity for rural youth to be exposed to non-traditional employment possibilities. Historically, rural youth have been counseled into traditional career tracks. Girls are encouraged to enroll in programs "acceptable" for women's occupations, e.g., homemaking, secretarial, cosmetology, and teaching, that lead to the lowest paying jobs; while boys are enrolled in programs that "train them to serve usefully and earn a family living." (Dunkle, et al., 1981). Boys are encouraged to take math, science and vocational education while girls are enrolled in the arts, literature, and home economics. Usually lower educational levels have been attained by rural youth and only recently has the academic achievement of rural students reached the national average. Rural schools are faced with problems such as inadequate facilities and instructional materials, limited course offering, inadequate overall funding, poor teacher quality, isolation and the lack of functional job opportunities for their students.

These problems are further compounded when the rural area is predominantly populated by economically deprived minority groups. As a historical trend, in the generally disadvantaged rural educational environment, where more than two million rural adults are classified as functionally illiterate, and where at least 50 percent of all school age children are not enrolled in schools, the barriers that impede rural minorities from educational equity are even more pronounced. For example, over 30 percent of all Hispanic

adults in rural areas dropped out of school; 24 percent of all rural blacks; and while the drop-out rate for Indians in rural areas is not known, the drop-out rate for Indians nationally is 40 percent (Sher, 1977).

Urban and suburban interests dominate national policies and rural schools lack financial support from both state and federal governments. Fortunately that picture is now changing with an increased national awareness of the need for federal rural educational policies and a growing concern for the quality of education available to all our students, whether rural or urban.

Currently, job opportunities for rural youth are increasing with the urban to rural turnaround affecting rural communities in many ways. Since 1790, when the first census was taken, there has been an increase in the percentage of urban population finally reaching 75 percent in 1970. This movement from rural to urban was triggered by the mechanization of agriculture and the expansion of urban industrial employment opportunities. This trend has now reversed with the development of job opportunities, the improvement of services in rural centers, the movement of people into rural retirement developments and the American preference for living in non-congested areas (Beale, 1981). Consequences of this trend will play an important role in shaping the future of rural communities.

Occupational and Educational Opportunities for Rural Youth

Although there has indeed been a reversal in the rural-urban trend, rural youth are still faced with a restricted job market as compared to their urban counterparts. Because many rural communities are small and unspecialized, few job options are perceived to be available. Therefore, rural young people tend to migrate or to seek jobs whose primary appeal is availability. This

typically means low-skill level, or low-pay, occupations. Women tend to concentrate in the clerical and service positions. There appears to be little choice for women who do not want to break traditional occupational barriers (Dunne, 1979).

As the need for land-based occupations goes down and the traditional life style changes, how will the rural occupational scene be described in the future? This is not clear, and particularly not clear for the rural youth of today. Are they better off to migrate to the city, where better opportunities are not necessarily available to them? They often are not trained for the jobs available and city life is not attractive to many of our rural young people. With limited choices at home many feel trapped. This may be true of rural youth in general and young women particularly. Guidance counselors often report finding it difficult in getting girls to make any kind of plans for the future (Dunne, 1978). This presents a significant problem in that, as of 1978, 48% of rural women had been or were looking for outside employment, 24% of rural women aged 25-35 were employed and 33% of farm wives were employed (Far West Laboratory, 1980).

Although the proportion of rural women who are employed is growing, they are employed in low skill, low pay, low status jobs. Their median earnings are 50% below that of rural men and appreciably less than that of metropolitan women in comparable jobs. Rural women are prevented from competing for any jobs other than those at the low end of the pay and status continuum because they lack training and possess few marketable skills. Inadequate schooling is a contributing factor to both the lack of skill and the lack of confidence characteristic of rural women entering the job market. Most of the already limited high school vocational courses are considered inappropriate for women. Furthermore, many of these young women are not realistic about the problems

involved in combining work and marriage. They are not prepared to deal with the problems that face them when they leave high school, enter the labor market, and take on the responsibilities of homemaking.

According to the U.S. Bureau of the Census (1976), rural and metropolitan white women and rural white men all had about 12 years of schooling. However, data concerning minority women shows a very different picture. Rural Black women had, on the average, a ninth- or tenth-grade education; those living on farms had only an eighth-grade education. Rural Hispanic women averaged less than eight years of schooling. There was no census information concerning the educational levels of Native Americans or Native Alaskans.

Of the 17,000 school districts in the U.S., 12,000 are rural. One-third of the total school enrollment in this country is made up of rural children and youths. Yet, our rural schools are not meeting the needs of these youngsters. The educational programs and counseling services necessary to prepare rural youths to pursue higher level educational and occupational opportunities are inadequate or unavailable in geographically isolated, rural school districts. The specific and special needs of rural youngsters are often ignored in curricula designed for urban and suburban schools. Teachers are not adequately trained to focus on the needs of the rural students. Sex role stereotyping is common in curriculum materials, in learning materials, and in the attitudes of school personnel.

In terms of opportunities to attend higher education institutions, the picture for rural youth, although improving, is still bleak. Geographic distance and the accompanying added expense, often preclude the furthering of higher level educational aspirations. Once again, it is frequently the young woman who does not, or cannot, continue post-secondary education. It is the rural woman who gives up her plans in favor of the brother or husband. Although,

often, she is the superior scholastic performer. The traditional constraint of men as the breadwinners indicates that educational resources be allocated to them (Dunne, 1979).

As early as 1944, at the First White House Conference on Rural Education, the educational rights of rural young people were determined. These rights were reiterated at conferences in 1954 and 1962. Included in the original charter was a description of satisfactory secondary education which would "provide initial learning for occupations and an open door to college and the professions" (Bail, 1971). Where do we stand today, nearly forty years after the 1944 conference? We have a long way to go to meet those goals, particularly in relation to the rural population encompassing economically deprived, and ethnic minority groups.

Aspirations and Expectations of Rural Youth

Because rural youth seem to perceive few and limited options in terms of educational and occupational opportunities, in most cases their educational and occupational aspirations and expectations are low. Edington's research (1975) stresses that these are often limited to roles "both visible and consistent with their socio-economic background." Since there appears to be a limited range of occupational types in the rural area, Taylor and Jones (1963) suggest there is little in rural high school students' social contexts to encourage them to raise their educational sights, or think inventively about the future. In a series of studies of rural youth, (Edington, Pettibone & Heldt, 1975; Kuvlesky & Edington, 1976), Anglos seemed to have the highest educational aspirations followed by Mexican-Americans, and Native Americans. Expectations followed a similar pattern. However, drastic sex differences were reported in that rural girls expected marriage and aspired to lower professions (cosmetology

and clerical and sales occupations). In a working paper produced in 1977 at the National Conference on Rural America, social attitudes were blamed for the limitations on young women's aspirations. It concluded women counselors were needed to serve as role models and to emphasize in their counseling the need for job training and career counseling.

The role of the secondary teacher and counselor cannot be overemphasized in terms of the aspirations and expectations of rural youth and the female teen-ager in particular. Cosby, Picon and Steven (1979), in looking at career preferences and educational aspirations of rural youth in the deep South, found that educational attainment in early adulthood was strongly influenced by career and career-related preferences developed years earlier in high school. An overwhelming number shared the American success dream of higher education attainment and professional careers. However, there was a considerable dichotomy between career and educational preferences and actual follow-through behavior. Early marital plans depressed attainment for both sexes, but the negative effects were considerably greater for women.

Rural men tended to select a large number of occupations as both aspirations and expectations. These occupations ranged along the entire status continuum. However, females selected more restricted occupations, typically those of traditional female pursuits and middle status level. The housewife role was an expectation rather than an aspiration. An attitude of resignation on the part of females is reflected in the three percent who desired a "housewife" career, as opposed to the 29 percent who expected such a role (Cosby, 1979). The rural female high school graduate is frequently faced with choosing between the dream of a professional career and conforming to the traditional rural family wishes of staying at home with expectations for marriage and family. Conformity reflects the typically rural conservative view (Dunne, 1979).

Thus the rural woman is caught in a culture conflict between traditional, conservative rural attitudes and a desire to change her lifestyle. This conflict is itself a barrier to attaining equity in educational and employment opportunities for rural women. It is important to keep in mind, as stated by Chu (1980), that the "sex stereotypic attitudes and restrictive educational and occupational expectations of rural women are as characteristic of rural women as they are of rural men and are inherent in the social structure" (p. 14). Although, according to Edington (1978), many rural women express greater educational aspirations than rural men, most plan to marry early and do not expect to continue their educations.

Lack of adequate and appropriate educational programs and counseling services contribute, not only to minimal skills, but also to the low aspirations and expectations of rural women. The rural social structure and environment are additional factors serving to limit the aspirations of rural women. Clarenbach (1977) perceives that, "Rural areas suffer a dearth of role models and field observation experiences which can broaden the realization of young girls that the world offers other career choices than motherhood and secretarial work" (p. 29).

Accompanying the problems of limited occupational opportunities, limited role models, and the dilemma of the changing rural milieu is the compounding potential problem of low self-esteem. Petersen and others (1978) found that adolescents in larger communities think more highly of themselves than do adolescents in rural communities. This was especially true of the females. She found similarities between rural and inner-city youth which resulted in dim hopes and dreams for the future and, therefore, low self-esteem. Realistic hopes for a satisfying and fulfilling future do not appear to be within reach. Factors identified were the socioeconomic environment, family role, feelings devoid of hope and accomplishment.

Attempts to implement change through educational programs, if they were to be effective, must be accompanied by social policy changes. Government commitment to assist rural youth, particularly women, is essential. There is very little research data in this area. Chu (1980) indicated that good unbiased research studies need to be designed and carried out. Clarenbach (1977) points out the same need and further, that information concerning rural girls and women is even more lacking. Public statistics with specific rural female categories are almost non-existent. Little attention has been directed to rural females by either their rural educators or women's educational advocates.

Teachers, counselors, and administrators who know rural life and who are educated to deal effectively with problems specific to rural schools and their students are in a position to aid rural youth (Bail, 1971). Yet appropriate role models are limited. Career education materials are also limited (Slater, 1977), and those that are available need to be carefully assessed to ensure that they do not continue to contribute to the low aspirations and expectations of both young male and female students.

Pre-Service and In-Service of Teachers in Rural Schools

Much has been written regarding the need for special preparation of teachers for rural schools. A number of studies (Amodeo, 1982; Charles and others, 1969) have reported that teachers in rural schools felt they were inadequately prepared for teaching in rural settings. In a study currently underway by Amodeo, Martin and Reece, preliminary findings based on responses received from over 1300 teachers to date indicates that over 80% of those teachers had no specific preparation for teaching in a rural setting and more than one-third believed no specific preparation was needed for preparing

teachers for rural settings. Only 2% of the teachers responding to date had taken specific courses designed for teaching in rural schools and less than 7% indicated they believed that would be the most appropriate approach for preparing teachers for teaching in a rural setting. About 20% of these respondents recommended that "specific content related to rural schools be integrated in regular courses" while another 20% recommended inservice workshops would be the most appropriate approach for preparing teachers for working in rural settings.

These findings come from a nine-state study in the Rocky Mountain and Central Plains states. Analysis of the final results may show somewhat different trends; however, we have been influenced to some extent in regard to what we are recommending as the future direction for preparing both pre-service and in-service teachers for rural settings.

Pre-service and in-service education for teachers who intend to teach or are teaching in rural areas should include components related to teaching in multi-grade level classrooms; planning effectively for integrating disciplines/subject areas; planning and implementing instruction with multiple subject assignments and in which 4, 5, 6 and even 7 preparations are required per day; supervising several different extracurricular activities; planning curriculum without extended services provided by a professional curriculum development staff; appropriate utilization of community resources; enhancing learning of rural children and youth with limited instructional resources; working and communicating with parents as a means of promoting further pupil growth; and models of outstanding rural school programs.

Most of these components tend to be more characteristic of rural school assignments than they do of urban districts. In the study currently underway

by Amodeo, Martin and Reece, we have found that teachers in rural elementary schools tend to have a greater number of extracurricular assignments than do secondary teachers in the same schools. For example, more than two-thirds (68.5%) of the elementary teachers had two or more extracurricular activities for which they were responsible while this was true of only 43% of the secondary teachers. Examples of such assignments include: club sponsor; coaching interscholastic and intramural athletics; drama activities; student council or class sponsor; music activities; and ticket selling. Each of these activities was assigned to teachers at both the elementary and secondary level. Surely this is a responsibility ignored in most current pre-service and even in-service teacher preparation programs.

Planning for effective learning to take place is an especially complex task for teachers in rural schools. Frequently, teachers must teach two or more grade levels in one classroom, must teach three or more different content courses which are often in separate disciplines, and will have four or more different preparations each day. In our current study, we have found that nearly one-third of the secondary teachers taught two or more separate disciplines, 70% taught three or more different content courses, and 46% were faced with four or more different preparations per day. To make such a teaching assignment even more difficult is the typical lack of professional assistance in curriculum planning and development at the local level in most rural districts.

Use of resources is another area which needs special attention for teachers in rural schools. Teachers must recognize the uniqueness of community resources in rural areas as compared with those found in urban settings. Learning materials are often limited in rural schools due to lack of available finances. The potential for enhanced resources in rural schools is rapidly increasing

with the advent of the electronic age and the information society. Micro-computers, increasing availability of software, electronic mail, computer linkages with ERIC and services such as SPIN can greatly enhance learning opportunities for rural youngsters at a reasonable cost, especially if the "Apple Bill" is passed in Congress. These resources have the potential of reducing what we often call rural isolation since resources such as huge libraries can be tapped at limited cost. Teachers, however, must be educated to assume somewhat different roles than they've had in traditional school settings.

Another component which is important in both pre-service and in-service education of teachers in rural settings is that of effectively working with and communicating with parents. Although this is usually thought of as an important aspect in teacher education programs whether rural or urban, some unique aspects exist in rural communities. Actions and words of teachers quickly become common knowledge throughout rural communities. Individuals who lack understanding of rural sociology and culture can easily become negative rather than positive models in the community. As a result, their relationships with both students and parents can reduce and even destroy their effectiveness as facilitators of learning. This, then, must also be addressed in both pre-service and in-service education programs.

An important component which is essential appears to be knowledge about exemplary rural school programs. The basis for this judgement lies in the Amodeo, Martin and Reece Study in which respondents indicated a high degree of satsifaction with various aspects of their school programs. Examples of these aspects included: textbooks used, type of classroom activities provided, teacher evaluation of student progress, opportunities to innovate, financial support of innovative practices, availability of inservice programs and

opportunities for teachers to attend these programs, and satisfaction with the scope, sequence and articulation of curriculum. A high degree of satisfaction was also expressed with the following: community support of curricular offerings, guidance and counseling services, school library and media center, preparation of teachers, teacher assignments, school program evaluation, competence of teachers in working with rural children and youth, and the general school curriculum. This investigation poses these questions: Do these respondents have sufficient understanding of what exemplary rural school programs are to enable them to make adequate judgements concerning the quality of programs in their own schools? Is this high degree of satisfaction founded primarily in these teachers' closeness to and personal investment in their own school's program rather than on knowledge of what that program could become? Sufficient information is unavailable to determine the reasons for such a high degree of satisfaction concerning the quality of current programs, but it is important to note that literature in the field and casual observation would tend to indicate that such perceptions may be unjustified at least to the extent they are held. This would also seem to be an important element to include in both pre-service and in-service education of teachers who expect to serve or are serving in rural schools.

Recommendations for strengthening both pre-service and in-service education of teachers for rural schools include:

1. The regular pre-service teacher-education program should be "infused" with content related to rural schools.

2. Course content and field experiences related to roles of teachers, especially for those in rural schools, should include some emphasis in: purposes of extracurricular activities and the relationship of these activities to the total school program; the role of the sponsor in the extracurricular program; and management of participants in non-required, informal activities.

3. Planning for and organizing effective learning experiences in multi-grade, multiple discipline teaching assignments is a common aspect of rural schools. Since this is a complex task, especially for new teachers, it is important that competence in this area be emphasized in the preservice program.

4. Pre-service teachers should have knowledge of curriculum development processes which are essential to providing effective scope, sequence and articulation of learning at both the school and district levels. Teachers in rural settings should achieve further competence in curriculum development since lack of professional curriculum leaders in rural schools places leadership for curriculum change in the hands of teachers.

5. Both pre-service and in-service education programs should give special attention to the various community resources found in rural areas which can enhance learning. Environmental, business, industrial, governmental and person resources should be emphasized.

6. Increased attention should be given to new roles of teachers associated with and made possible by the use of microcomputers in the rural school classroom. Teachers must become competent in identification, evaluation, selection and utilization of appropriate software and services in the classroom.

7. Ongoing in-service programs must be implemented in rural schools. Increased sharing of resources among neighboring districts will become a necessity. Leaders, planners and consultants for such in-service programs should come from the ranks of practicing rural teachers as well as personnel external to these districts.

8. Field experiences in rural settings should be arranged to permit pre-service teachers to develop insights in and competencies essential for working effectively in rural schools.

The Roles of the School, Business and Community in Forming a Cooperative Relationship to Meet the Needs of Rural Communities

It will take a combined effort on the parts of school, business and the local community working together interactively and cooperatively to meet the needs of the rural areas. Each component has a significant and leading role to play.

A salient factor overriding the rural scene is the rapid advances of the technological age. It may, indeed, be one of the most positive influences on rural change. Microcomputers and other technological advances, including

information retrieval systems and various forms of electronic delivery systems, will make it possible for specific kinds of professional work to be done far away from urban centers (Lewis, 1978). Specific entreprenurial businesses which, heretofore, have not been a part of the rural area because of distance and isolation, may become a normal part of rural life.

The rural school can be a powerful agent in this new age. This is an opportunity for teachers to serve as community leaders. Teachers familiar with the community and who have good communication skills must be willing to serve as role models to rural youth, particularly to rural females. School counseling services should produce and promote non-traditional, non-sexist career materials delineating such options. In the school curriculum reducing sex role discrimination, long-term life planning, specific vocational training and the identification of markets for small entreprenurial enterprises are areas which should be integrated throughout the secondary program (Dunne, 1979, p. 16).

For young women, and those more mature, who wish to enter the labor force the school could make locally available intensive literacy programs and job preparation programs (including career planning and identification and development of skills such as those required for small business). Working collaboratively with the local community and businesses the school can be a force in expanding and improving employment opportunities for women (Dunne, 1979). Delivery systems such as educational television and telephone networks might be used effectively to reach isolated locations and to provide much needed educational programs and other services.

Businesses have a leading role to play in the expansion of economic development and vocational education in rural areas. They must be responsible

for implementing federal policy to offset sex discrimination and to deal specifically with employment problems. Use of electronic and computer devices and services in cooperation with the school and community, could open employment opportunities which have not been previously considered possible. Men and women in local businesses can and should be willing to serve as role models for the youth of their communities and out-lying areas.

The community itself has a responsibility to take leadership in cooperative efforts with the other two identified components. Its role is multiply faceted, but a key factor is that of support. Support of good school facilities and teacher salaries is an important feature. In addition, the community can provide support services to facilitate the efforts of school and businesses. Programs might include a national networking of women's resource agents to assist rural women in breaking into the job market and in coping with both employment and traditional home responsibilities. The county extension agent model is already in place in most rural areas. A program providing women counselors who are sensitive to the problems of rural women could aid in career counseling on how to break into non-traditional job markets and job training. The community, too, can provide specific support for regional dissemination centers which could play a leading role in terms of information retrieval and dispersal designed to improve the quality of life and education in rural areas.

Sher (1977) has emphasized that over the years educators and policy makers have invested heavily in time and money to further rural reforms which were neither sought nor desired by the targeted areas. As a result, much rural reform has been "written off." Yet, he suggests that there is interest and commitment to schools and youth by rural inhabitants. Significantly what has

received the most support and achieved positive, effective, long lasting effects are those programs which have been locally initiated, developed, and controlled. To this end, in order to improve the quality of life and education of rural areas, Sher suggests a unique cooperative arrangement between school, businesses and the community: the School-Based Community Development Corporation. This is one promising alternative among many which focuses on incremental changes for rural educational reform. To our knowledge, at this point, such an idea has not been implemented, but indicates a challenging and thought-provoking approach to rural problems.

The concept of Community Development Corporations was originally implemented in the late 1960's. CDC's were designed to increase effective economic development and reverse the cycle of rural deprivation. They were legally incorporated organizations primarily staffed and controlled by community members. Shares were available to all CDC employees, CDC members, interested parties, and community residents. All profits were reinvested. The major activity was to promote development efforts through: a) the sponsorship of specific programs, b) a catalyst for obtaining outside resources, c) the ownership and operation of businesses and services. Since existing programs appeared to be incapable of dispelling deprivation, this approach seemed to have particular merit, especially in light of the focus on self-determination (Sher, 1977).

Sher's School-Based Community Development Corporation is, then, one step further in the CDC concept. As a full-fledged CDC the rural school could play a powerful and effective role in a collaborative arrangement with the rural community and its businesses in performing the functions of: a) an economic development program, b) a manpower development project, c) a community planning agency, d) a career education program, e) a community services agency, f) a

non-partisan political institution (Sher, 1977, p. 221). The possibilities of such a concept are an exciting challenge.

In whatever manner the educational and economic problems and needs of rural communities are addressed, all involved must recognize that there are many positive elements of rural life. Rural America is not a cultural vacuum. The contributions and cultural values of rural peoples must be respected. Encouraging changes does not imply imposing urban lifestyles on rural populations.

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